

Communication and campaigns

Thematic File Road Safety N°16



Communication and campaigns

Thematic File Road Safety N°16

Research report no. 2018-T-02-SEN

Authors: Focant Nathalie, Leblud Julien, Torfs Katrien and Meesmann Uta

Responsible publisher: Karin Genoe

Publisher: Vias institute – Knowledge Centre Road Safety

Date of publication: 8/10/2018

Legal deposit: D/2018/0779/13

The complete report is available in Dutch and French:

Focant, N., Leblud, J., Torfs, K., & Meesmann, U. (2018) Themadossier verkeersveiligheid nr. 16. Communicatie en campagnes over verkeersveiligheid. Brussel, België : Vias institute – Kenniscentrum Verkeersveiligheid

Focant, N., Leblud, J., Torfs, K., & Meesmann, U. (2018) Dossier thématique sécurité routière n°16. Communication et campagnes en sécurité routière. Bruxelles, Belgique : l'Institut Vias - Centre de Connaissance Sécurité Routière

This research was made possible by the financial support of the Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport.

Summary

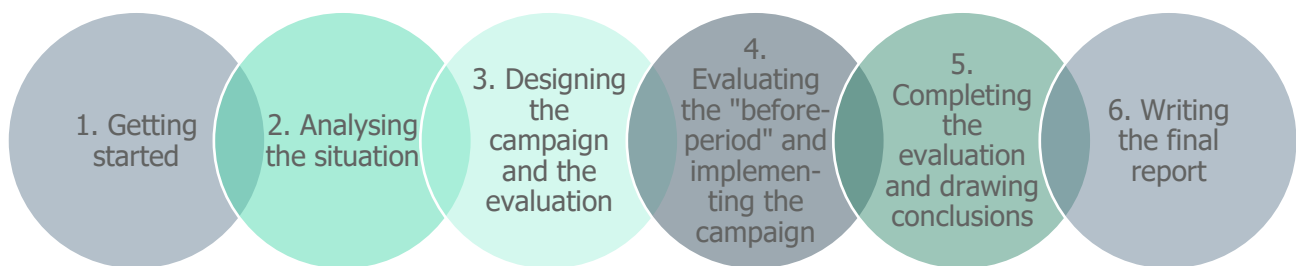
This thematic report deals with communication in the area of road safety and with awareness campaigns in particular. Alongside measures such as legislation, criminal prosecutions, education, driver training, and technical improvements, road safety campaigns form part of a wide range of tools intended to improve safety on the road. These campaigns can be **defined** as "purposeful attempts to inform, persuade, or motivate people in view of changing their beliefs and/or behaviour in order to improve road safety as a whole or in a specific, well-defined large audience, typically within a given time period by means of organised communication activities involving specific media channels often combined with interpersonal support and/or supportive actions such as enforcement, education, legislation, enhancing personal commitment, rewards, etc." (Delhomme et al., 2009; European project CAST "Campaigns and Awareness-Raising Strategies in Traffic Safety").

This means that the ultimate **aim** of awareness campaigns is to improve road safety by prompting a voluntary, long-term change of attitudes and behaviour on the road. In practical terms, this is translated by one or more underlying objectives that each of these campaigns seeks to achieve:

- to inform people about the existence of a new law or the modification of an existing law;
- to improve knowledge about and/or awareness of the risk, appropriate preventative behaviour, new driver assistance systems, etc.;
- to change the underlying factors of driving behaviour that are known to influence road users, particularly the social norms;
- to change risky behaviour or support safe driving practices;
- to reduce the frequency and severity of road crashes. (Delhomme et al., 2009)

An awareness campaign can only achieve its objectives if it is actually seen by road users and if the information it contains is both taken into account and is implemented. In this sense, **the design and implementation of the campaign** are crucial stages. According to the CAST project, a road safety awareness campaign maximises its chances of succeeding if it follows the 6 steps illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Description of the 6 important steps when designing a road safety campaign, according to the CAST project



Source: Delhomme et al., 2009

Steps one and two are designed to **clearly define the problem** that will be dealt with by the campaign **and the target group(s)** to be reached. This is done using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information that either already exists or is collected for this purpose. It is also at this stage that **the theoretical model(s)** on which the campaign strategy will be based is (are) determined. These three elements are the key factors for the success of a campaign. The **actual design of the campaign** takes place in step 3 of the process. This involves defining the campaign strategy (which determines how to influence the target audience), designing the content and style of the message (what is going to be said, by whom and how), developing the message and slogans and preparing the media plan (choosing the appropriate media platform). This is the moment at which the aims of the campaign are defined, as well as how it is going to be run (where, when, how) and any potential additional actions (such as police checks) that could be combined in order to increase its effectiveness. The campaign is then **pre-tested** before being **officially launched**. Finally, once the campaign is over, it is essential to **evaluate** its process, impact, and

financial dimension. This step aims at determining whether the campaign was effective (if it achieved its objectives ...) and efficient (... given the budget allocated). It is also crucial for fine-tuning the process, the strategic approach taken, and other key elements of the campaign for a potential next campaign. Lastly, there is the **final report** which provides the information needed for the reader to have a good understanding of the campaign and its results.

Determining whether road safety campaigns, taken overall, are **effective and contribute to the improvement of road safety** is not simple, especially taking account of the diversity of the campaigns run, the scarcity of evaluation reports and the difficulty of isolating the effect of campaigns combined with other activities, such as making checks and controls more stringent. Despite everything, the literature indicates a statistical association between road safety awareness campaigns and a reduction in the number of road crashes (decreased by approximately 5-10%). Meta-analyses of road safety campaigns also show that the **effectiveness of campaigns varies considerably, according to the type of driving behaviour being targeted** (in particular see Theofilatos et al., 2017). Depending on the study consulted, awareness campaigns about wearing seatbelts are associated with an average increase of 15% to 30% in the wearing of seatbelts. The use of child seats also increases by 12% to 28% after an awareness campaign on this topic. As for campaigns focusing on speed, these are associated with a decline of 30% to 45% in deaths and a reduction in speeding of 6% to 25%. Finally, studies dealing with campaigns against drinking and driving yield more mixed results, although they may cut the number of road crashes by as much as 20%.

In addition to analysing the effectiveness of campaigns, the literature also highlights the **key factors that contribute to the success** of a campaign. The majority of them relate to the design of the campaign, such as basing the message on relevant scientific results and theoretical models, taking the context into account, and identifying the target audience(s), as well as coming up with a message that is clear, credible, and persuasive. During the implementation of the campaign, the additional use of other activities (such as education, legislation, or criminal prosecution) has also been proven to be effective. A campaign will have greater impact on driving behaviour if it is included as part of a more general approach, or if it is associated with an increase in the frequency of police checks, than if it is on its own.

In Belgium, the **main regional bodies responsible for awareness campaigns** to the general public are the Agence wallonne pour la Sécurité routière in Wallonia, the Vlaamse Stichting Verkeerskunde in Flanders, and Bruxelles-Mobilité in the Brussels Capital Region. In addition to these major stakeholders in road safety awareness and campaigns, Belgium also has numerous other bodies that implement various awareness activities. This is particularly the case of road user associations or organisations of road crash victims, as well as companies or local public authorities.

The **collaboration** between these public entities has resulted in the success of **Bob**, a national drink-driving awareness campaign (which used to be organised by the Vias institute); the use of the campaign has gone beyond the regional level. Created in 1995, Bob is one of the best-known Belgian road safety awareness campaigns, both nationally and internationally. Repeated annually during the year-end festive season (as well as at other times for a number of years now), the aim of Bob is to convince road users not to drink and drive and to make alcohol and driving socially unacceptable. To achieve this aim, the Bob campaign takes a positive, non-preaching approach that highlights the desired behaviour being aimed for and combines awareness and police prosecutions (all Bob campaigns are run at the same time as police alcohol checks are stepped up). A range of indicators illustrates the success of this campaign: in the early years of the different campaigns, more than 90% of people surveyed were aware of the Bob concept and over 90% thought the initiative good or very good. There is also less driving under the influence while the campaign is running. The effectiveness and success of the various Bob campaigns are such that they have been quoted on numerous occasions as being among the best practices in raising awareness of the problem of drink-driving. These campaigns are also used as a model for campaigns by many European and non-European countries.

